

4/16/2007 This Week in Congress

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April 16, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Completing my Eleventh Annual Listening Tour

This week, I completed my eleventh annual Big First Listening Tour. During the tour, I made community visits in each of the 69 counties of the First Congressional District. It is always a pleasure joining residents for a discussion about current issues and ways I can better serve the interests of Kansans in Washington, D.C.

Many of my tour stops came off of the heels of the severe winter storms that swept the western part of the state at the beginning of the year. Despite the devastation, I was once again reminded of the strength and spirit of our communities and the values that make Kansas a great place to live, work and raise a family. I not only appreciated hearing Kansans express their views on national policy, but also talk about their successes and achievements. Our state will continue to thrive thanks to the hard work ethic and dedication of its citizens.

If there were any issues that we did not have the opportunity to discuss or if you were unable to attend a meeting, you can always contact me through my website.

Speaking to the Annual Meeting of the Plains Cotton Growers

At the end of the week, I spoke at the annual meetings of the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association and the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association. Plains Cotton Cooperative Association has a cotton gin in Moscow, as well as a warehouse in Liberal and has become the co-op that many Kansans participate in. I was one of the speakers at the annual gathering and was joined by Jim Wiesemeyer, longtime agriculture reporter and analyst of farm policy and trade issues. I talked about the upcoming farm bill, as well as issues surrounding the budget and trade.

Most agriculture in the United States is dependent on trade, but trade is especially important to the cotton industry where a majority of the U.S. crop is exported. Currently, U.S. cotton producers are struggling to compete with heavily subsidized cotton markets abroad.

As we look ahead to the writing of the new farm bill, many grain crops are experiencing historically high prices. Cotton producers, however, are facing historically low prices. This is a reminder that markets are cyclical and a safety net to assure stability in the agriculture sector is important. Our attempts to open global trade should not put at risk the safety net provided to agriculture producers by the commodity title of the farm bill. Domestic farm policy is best set by the United States Congress and not by World Trade Organization negotiators. As debate on the 2007 Farm Bill comes into focus, I believe the current structure of the commodity title will provide the framework for the next farm bill. However, I will also continue to seek opportunities to improve the current system.

I appreciated the opportunity to join these agricultural producers for their annual meeting and learn about issues important to them. It is important that U.S. farm policy maintain a strong and vibrant agriculture industry in the United States that will allow American agriculture to be passed to the next generation.

Accepting 2008 Service Academy Applications

I am now accepting applications for nominations to the United States Service Academies. The academies include the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York; the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. Those selected will enter the academies in June 2008.

Due to limited placement, I encourage all interested candidates to also apply to the offices of U.S. Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts. My application deadline is October 1, 2007. [Click here](#) to read about selection criteria and how to apply.

Attending Hays Rotary and Learning about Safety at Hays High School

On Monday, I attended the Hays Rotary meeting at Vagabond Restaurant. I enjoyed hearing from Hays High School (HHS) Assistant Principals Tom Albers and Marty Straub, as well as Officer Jeff Ridgway, HHS School Resource Officer,

about school safety.

In the Office

Ryan Roth of Holcomb was in Washington, D.C. this week participating in the People to People educational program. Ryan visited my office to learn more about my role as a Representative in Congress. Walt Aucott of Lawrence was in with the U.S. Geological Survey to talk about water research projects in Kansas. Daniel Rasure of Goodland was in with Sunflower Renewables to discuss potential wind energy projects in Kansas. Karla Finnell of Topeka, who works for the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved, also stopped by to visit.

Many Kansans were in my office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Eric and Barbara King of Lawrence, Jerry and Debbie Haynes of Hays, Neil and Pat Buie of Merriam, Larry and Kay Salisbury of Melvern, Clayton and Lois Moon of Junction City, Roger and Jan Stremel of Ellinwood, and Chuck and Marion Stuart of Clay Center. In from Manhattan were Jan Gibbs, Kay Hoffman, Ray and Mary Jo Kurtz, Warren and Nancy Prawl, Robert and Lila Snell, and Joan Spiker. Noel and Deanna Klein and Lane and Marilyn Klein of Shawnee Mission also came by for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry